

September 7, 2006

MEMORANDUM

To: Dr. Bettie Rose Horne, Chair, and Members, Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing

From: Dr. R. Lynn Kelley, Acting Director of Academic Affairs and Licensing

**Consideration of Proposed Guidelines for the
Improving Teacher Quality Higher Education Grants Program
(PL 107-110, Title II of the No Child Left Behind Act)
Project Year 2007-08**

Background

Since 1984, the Commission has been responsible for administering federal funds under the Title II program of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)*. ESEA was re-authorized in FY 2001 under the *No Child Left Behind Act*. Under this legislation, several programs were combined and others were greatly modified. The former *Dwight D. Eisenhower Professional Development Program* has been modified and renamed. While the program is still under Title II, this section of the law is now entitled *Improving Teacher Quality State Grants*. The purpose of Title II is to increase the academic achievement of all students by helping schools and school districts improve teachers and principal quality and ensure that all teachers are highly qualified.

The higher education program is a competitive grants program with a primary focus on professional development. Due to its less restrictive nature, the *Improving Teacher Quality Program* provides the Commission with the ability to expand its professional development offerings to the P-12 community to nine content areas and other school personnel. The program seeks to bring together higher education faculty and P-12 school personnel to foster mutually beneficial partnerships based on sustained professional development. The ultimate goal of the partnership is improved student performance.

The federal regulations stipulate that the Commission will only award grants to eligible partnerships that must be comprised of, at a minimum, (1) a private or public

institution of higher education and the division of the institution that prepares teacher and principals; (2) a school of arts and sciences; and (3) a high-need local education agency. Additional partners may also be included. Projects may focus on any of nine core academic areas (English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography). Professional development activities may include teachers, principals, and/or paraprofessionals. The focus of the proposed projects must be on low-performing schools and the Commission is charged with ensuring an equitable geographic distribution of grants.

The *Guidelines* were modified for FY 2007-08 to reflect the new legislation and were developed in collaboration with the S.C. Department of Education. Federal regulations require that the Commission work in conjunction with the Department in meeting statewide educational needs. The priority areas derive from the federal legislation as well as those developed in the State's Consolidated State Plan sent to the U.S. Department of Education.

The allocation of funds to the states is based on two methods. First, funds to the state are allocated based on the FY 2001 amount received under the former Eisenhower Professional Development and Class-Size Reduction programs. Second, any remaining funds from the federal appropriation are distributed through a formula based on the State's school-age population and percent of these children in families with incomes below the poverty level.

Under federal regulations, 2.5 percent of the *Improving Teacher Quality State Grants* funds for the state are allocated to Commission to be used for the competitive grants program. The Commission will award up to \$900,000. Proposed projects may request up to \$150,000 in funds. Multi-year projects are allowed and encouraged for maximum impact. The number of grants awarded will be primarily determined by the quality of the proposals submitted and the size of the negotiated final budgets in comparison to the total funds available.

With these funds, the Commission issues *Guidelines for Proposals* for a competitive grants program. The attached *Guidelines* represent the Commission's proposed rules and regulations for the competitive grants program. For your ease, staff recommended changes from the 2006-07 Guidelines are noted in the attached document as tracked changes.

In summary, this grant competition represents an important vehicle for K-16 collaboration in service to the State's teachers, principals, and paraprofessionals.

Recommendation

The staff recommends that the Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing commend favorably to the Commission approval of the attached *Guidelines for the Improving Teacher Quality Higher Education Grant Program* for FY 2007-08.

Attachment: *Draft No Child Left Behind, Improving Teacher Quality Higher Education Grant Program, Guidelines for Proposals, FY 2007-08*